

*THE RECENT
REBELLION IN NORTH-WEST CANADA.*

THE Rebellion in the North-West Territories would appear to have aroused little interest in England. Telegrams published in the London newspapers have been meagre and incorrect, and owing their origin generally to American sources, have been frequently misleading. All eyes at home have been fixed on the more stirring events in the Soudan or in the probabilities of war in Afghanistan, while the campaign in the Far West, undertaken at a day's warning, and brilliantly brought to a close in a few weeks, has passed by almost unnoticed.

Having, by General Middleton's request, accompanied him to the front as chief of the staff, I may be able to furnish some account of his operations in the Saskatchewan which may not be without interest. To understand them let us glance back at the events of fifteen years ago, and at the Red River Rebellion of 1870.

Louis Riel, a French Canadian half-breed, through the influence of Archbishop Taché was educated for the Roman Catholic Church. Riel first came into notice in the autumn of 1869 when, on the transfer of Prince Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Government of the Dominion, he espoused the cause of the French half-breeds, or Metis, as they are called, and published a Bill of Rights, his chief assumption being that the Hudson's Bay Company had no legal power to hand over land, the property of Metis and Indians, to the Dominion Government without their formal consent. With some 400 'breeds' he established himself at Fort Garry, a Hudson's Bay post at the junction of the Red River and Assiniboine. He there proclaimed a provisional government, one of the first acts of which was the execution, or rather the cold-blooded murder, after a mock trial, of Scott, a settler who had dared to resist his authority. An expedition, consisting of a mixed force of British and Canadian troops, in all about 1,200 men, was organised for the suppression of the revolt, and during the spring and summer of 1870 Colonel Wolseley, with his birch bark canoes and voyageurs, was pushing up the rapids and over the portages of the Shebaudowan, and threading his way through Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods, and with him McNeill, Redvers Buller, and

to Battleford
127 miles

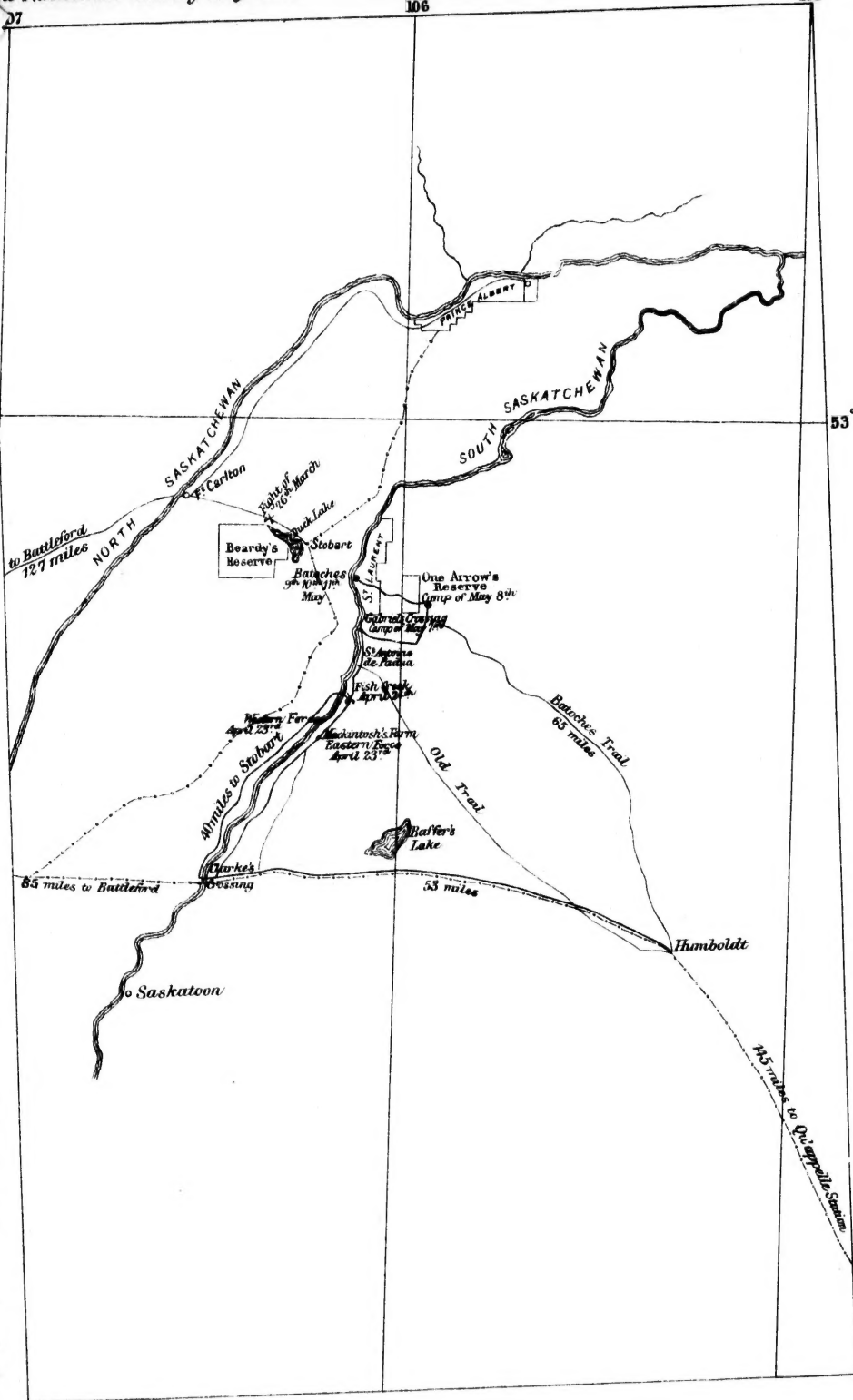
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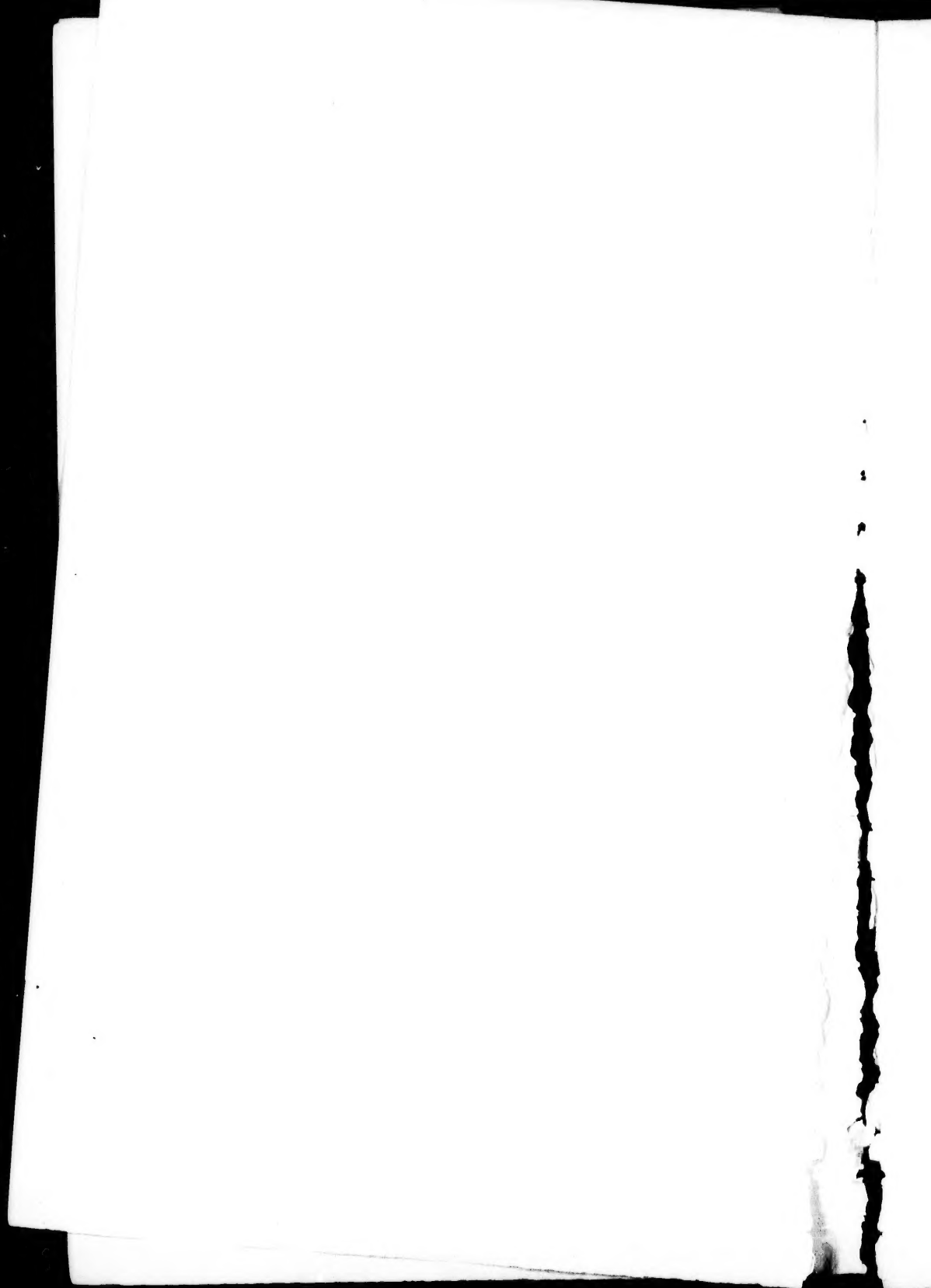
Speltter

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Butler were sowing the seed of future laurels. Wolseley reached Fort Garry in August without firing a shot. The gates of the old fort stood open. Riel had fled to the States. He was tried for his life, and outlawed for five years.

Fort Garry, the palisaded Hudson's Bay post of 1870, is now the important city of Winnipeg; the three months from Toronto to the Red River by boat and canoe are now five days, in the luxurious carriages of the Canada Pacific Railway; and Riel's rebellion of 1885 has taken place 500 miles beyond the Fort Garry of 1870, while the Iroquois and the Voyageurs of the St. Lawrence and Upper Ottawa have faithfully stood by their chief on the rapids of the Nile.

By the Manitoba Act of 1870 the claims of the Red River Metis were justly recognised. Each half-breed born in the province before the 1st of July 1870 received a grant of 240 acres of land in satisfaction of his half-breed title. Nevertheless, many of them fell back before the intrusion of the Dominion officials, and sought homes still further north, amongst their near relatives the Crees, beyond the Great Salt Plains on the banks of the Saskatchewan—they wished to be let alone. Now their bugbear, the red tape of civilisation, has again surrounded them, and the wilds of the North-West have given birth to the provinces of Saskatchewan, Assinaboia, and Athabasca, and these Metis and their descendants are again accused of rebellion.

But besides the Manitoba 'breeds' many whites moved northwards. The line of the Canada Pacific Railway, as originally proposed, lay far north of that which it now pursues, and in anticipation of the northern route, white adventurers, speculating on the prospect of future fortunes to be picked up along the line of railway, settled at Prince Albert, Battleford, and Edmonton. When the route was changed they found themselves *en l'air*, and have remained to sow discontent, and to spread sedition, should opportunity offer, against the common enemy, the Dominion Government.

Riel having long since completed his sentence of banishment was quite within the law when he made his appearance in the North-West during the summer of 1884; and though his arrival there was jealously watched at Ottawa, he was believed to have learned wisdom during his sojourn in the States, and no harm was expected from his visit.

At Ottawa the winter passed without a whisper of uneasiness, and it was not till late in March that, almost without warning, we found ourselves face to face with an organised rebellion.

The Metis of the North-West claim to be placed on the same footing as the Manitoba half-breeds, viz. to receive grants of 240 acres. They ask that patents for their land should be issued to settlers in possession, and they protest against the form of Government land-surveying, as likely to interfere with the arrangement of their farms

as at present existing. According to the old French custom, the Metis settlements line the river-banks, each farm having a small river frontage, and extending in a narrow strip a considerable distance inland. It is asserted that should the Government method of surveying in squares and giving grants in squares be insisted on, the river frontages will in many cases disappear from certain farms, and that at any rate much unnecessary annoyance would be caused by a new division of the settlements. The Metis say that it is now some ten years since they first put forward their claims, and that they have continued ever since to agitate in vain. In September 1884 a meeting was held at their settlement of St. Laurent, on the Saskatchewan, and the following Bill of Rights agreed upon:—

1. The subdivision into provinces of the North-West.
2. The half-breeds to receive the same grants and other advantages as the Manitoba half-breeds.
3. Patents to be issued at once to the settlers in possession.
4. The sale of half a million acres of Dominion lands, the proceeds to be applied to the establishment in the half-breed settlements of schools, hospitals, and similar institutions, and to the equipment of the poorer half-breeds with seed-grain and implements.
5. The reservation of a hundred townships of swamp land for distribution among the children of half-breeds during the next 120 years.
6. A grant of at least \$1,000 a year for the maintenance of our institutions, to be conducted by the nuns in each half-breed settlement.
7. Better provision for the support of the Indians.

The purely half-breed dispute practically rested on three points, viz. the grant of patents for lands already in possession, equal claims with Manitoba 'breeds,' and objections to Government form of survey. But there is also a feeling in the North-West, not at all confined to Metis, that local claims and interests are not understood or sufficiently recognised at distant Ottawa; and the feeling would have been more universally pronounced had not the first shot fired at Duck Lake at once alienated the loyal settlers from the Metis cause.

To these claims and assertions Ottawa answers that a commission had already been appointed to inquire into half-breed claims, that it was in the power of any half-breed legally entitled to obtain a patent for his farm by following the ordinary legal process, that the claims put forward for the Manitoba settlement are made by the very men who were already settled with in 1870, and that the Government form of survey can and will be, if required, so arranged as not in any way to interfere with the river frontages and farms—in fact, that 'the breeds' have no case at all.

Now that the rebellion has been brought to a close, we may be able to look behind the scenes, and to account for the cause which led to the final outbreak. We shall probably discover much white sedition.

We shall see that Riel and Gabriel Dumont were not counting only on their half-breed and Redskin rifles, but on the support of white men, who they had been gulled into believing would stand by them. Riel put his fighting men in his first line, but in his second line we may perhaps find the disappointed white contractor, the disappointed white land shark, the disappointed white farmer. There have been much bigger interests at stake than Metis claims.

Warnings of the coming storm, if given, had been underrated, when news arrived in Ottawa on March the 22nd, that Riel had seized the mail-bags near Duck Lake, and that the telegraph wire was cut between Prince Albert and Clarke's Crossing.

Prince Albert is a white settlement on the North Saskatchewan, not far above its junction with its southern branch, and is 279 miles from the nearest point in the Canada Pacific Railway. Between the two branches of the river is the reserve of the Cree chief 'Beardy,' and along the south branch are the Metis settlements of St. Laurent and St. Antoine de Padua, while to the south again is the reserve of 'One Arrow.' There is a mounted police post at Prince Albert, and also at Fort Carlton, forty-two miles higher up the river. At Duck Lake, close to Fort Carlton and between the two branches of the Saskatchewan, Riel first showed his hand.

It was an anxious time, for, in all this great North-West territory, reaching from the frontier of Manitoba to the Rockies, and stretching far away north into the little known prairie land of Athabasca and Peace River, there was no one to give a hand to the women and children dotted down along the river-banks, save 500 mounted police, scattered in small detachments over a country in which was a population of over 30,000 Indians.

The bad news reached Ottawa on the 22nd of March. On the 23rd General Middleton started for Winnipeg and the North-West. At that time not a shot had been fired, and it was hoped that with a display of force the rising might still be quelled without bloodshed; but on the 28th came the news of a fight between a detachment of mounted police under Major Crozier and a band of rebels under Riel, in which some police and eleven volunteers from Prince Albert were killed, and Major Crozier forced to retire to Fort Carlton. He had left the fort in the morning with about 100 men to secure some stores in the neighbourhood of Duck Lake. He was met by Riel at the head of a small band of rebels. There was some hasty conversation between the leaders on either side, a squabble and then a shot. Who fired first is doubtful, but an encounter ensued, in which Major Crozier was partially surrounded, and fell back to Fort Carlton, leaving his dead on the field. The same day Colonel Irvine,¹ with 100 mounted police, joined him at the Fort. Putting aside the loss of life the affair was unfortunate, as the actual collision would appear to have been avoid-

¹ Colonel Irvine commands the North-West Mounted Police.

able, or at any rate could have been postponed till after the junction of the two forces. The mounted police burned their fort at Carlton, and retired to Prince Albert, where they remained till General Middleton's arrival, after Riel's defeat at Batoches.

With Riel's success at Duck Lake, the white settlements of the Saskatchewan and Battle River, Prince Albert, Battleford, and Edmonton were immediately threatened with half-breed and Indian risings. It was for the relief of these distant settlements that General Middleton had to provide.

Before attempting to describe the military operations which followed on General Middleton's departure from Ottawa, it may be as well to consider the connection between the half-breed rebellion and the Indian fights which resulted from it.

Riel took up arms for the Metis cause, nominally so at any rate. Though a miserable creature himself, he named his price, and could have been bought out of the country in the autumn of last year. But he posed as a Metis patriot—the Indians were not directly interested in the rebellion—and 'Poundmaker' and 'Big Bear' would appear only to have followed the instincts of their race, when seeing, as they thought, Riel successful, they were tempted by the love of fighting and the love of plunder, and in many cases by the necessity of getting something to eat, to commit depredations for which no doubt they must be severely punished. Riel well knew the assistance which the Indians could afford him, and by at once driving in all the settlers' cattle, he could bribe them with food, and they could hardly be expected to resist the temptation. And yet it is doubtful if he had more than 250 armed Indians with him at Batoches. 'Poundmaker' and 'Big Bear,' urged on by Riel's emissaries, rose at Battleford and Fort Pitt. Robbery, murder, and perhaps a few atrocities they have committed, but grave as the danger was, Canada has escaped the horrors of an Indian war. The great nation of the Blackfeet, the Bloods, and the Piegans, have stood by her loyally in her trouble, while their hereditary enemies the Crees, closely allied by marriage to the Metis, have only partially joined the rebel cause. With 500 mounted police and without a single soldier Canada has ruled from Lake Winnipeg to the frontiers of British Columbia, and she may well be proud that during the tenure of the North-West territories previous to the rebellion of this summer, she had not lost a life in Indian warfare.

The haters of the Red Man should remember that he has a strong case against the White. He sees his hunting-grounds surveyed and broken up, and now the backbone of his existence, the buffalo, has vanished. In 1883, 150,000 buffalo robes were sold in St. Paul, and in 1884, 300. In Canada the buffalo has disappeared, and the Red Man, confined to his reserve, is mainly dependent for subsistence on the honesty of the Indian agencies, while they are not held blame-

less for the events of the last three months. Granted that, half-starved, the Red Man cannot attain to the Fennimore Cooper standard, granted that his race is doomed, he still exists, and was once the ruler of the soil. 'The best Indian is a dead one,' is an ignoble sentiment for a conquering race. We may congratulate ourselves that there has been no general Indian rising, and that with the defeat of Riel the Indian disturbance collapsed.

On the 1st of April I joined General Middleton at Qu'appelle, a station on the Canada Pacific Railway. We had with us the 90th Battalion from Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Field Battery, and two nine-pounder guns, and twenty-nine mounted scouts recruited from the settlers in the neighbourhood—in all about three hundred and eighty men. The Indian Reserves far and near were in a simmer of expectation, 'sitting on the fence,' as the Canadian says. Panic was spreading amongst the white settlements. Telegrams poured in hourly to the General, imploring help or arms. News arrived of murders by Indians at Battleford, while between us and Riel was two hundred and fifty miles of prairie. A blow must be dealt at him at once before the further spread of the rebellion. Troops must also be sent to succour Battleford and to reassure Edmonton. Let us consider the military resources at the disposal of the Dominion authorities, and the distances over which troops would require to move.

Canada's Army consists of a militia force of 36,000 men, not including the Reserve Militia. The force is sometimes spoken of as volunteers, sometimes as militia, but there is in reality no such difference. The force is essentially a volunteer force, composed of civilians from the towns and country, those raised in the former being called 'city corps,' and in the latter 'rural corps.' The amount of drill required by the Militia Act for each man is about sixteen days in two years. Many of the rural corps are not called out annually, and do no more drill than that required of them, while the city corps resemble much the volunteer corps of our large towns at home, and drill annually as arranged by their commanding officers. The men receive 50 cents=2s. a day for authorised drill. They are armed with the Snider rifle. In addition to her militia, Canada possesses a regular force enlisted as soldiers, and distributed in schools throughout the different provinces for purposes of instruction, and composed as follows:—Two schools of artillery, one at Quebec, one at Kingston, each possessing two field guns (9-pr. R.M.L.); a cavalry school at Point Lewis, Quebec; and three infantry schools, viz., at Toronto, St. John's, P.Q., and Fredericton, New Brunswick. The total strength of all schools combined cannot, by the Militia Act, exceed 750 men.

At the outbreak of the rebellion, with the exception of the 90th (Winnipeg) Battalion and a Field Battery (two guns) from Winnipeg, all

troops would be required to move up from Lower Canada. The Canada Pacific Railway was not entirely completed along the north shore of Lake Superior, there were breaks of seventy or eighty miles over which troops would have to march or to be conveyed by sleigh. With that exception there was railway communication from Quebec to the Rocky Mountains. The distance from Ottawa to Winnipeg is, by the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1,312 miles. From Winnipeg to Calgary 800 miles. Troops would require to leave the railway at certain stations between Winnipeg and Calgary, and march across the prairie to the threatened points—Prince Albert, Battleford, and Edmonton. The stations selected were: Calgary, for the Edmonton column, Swift Current, for the Battleford column,² and Qu'appelle Station, for the Prince Albert column. To General Strange (late R.A.) was given the command of the troops at Calgary, Lieutenant-Colonel Otter commanded the Battleford column, and General Middleton accompanied the troops intended to attack Riel, with a general command of the whole force in the field. I intend only to follow the movements of General Middleton's column.

The time of year was the most unpleasant for campaigning, the winter was just breaking up, snow was still on the ground, but was rapidly becoming slush, and we feared that with each succeeding day the trails would become more difficult. It was evident that we should draw no supplies from the country through which we had to march. We should pass no settlements of any importance, and though the snow would soon be gone, there would as yet be no grass for our horses. We should have to carry everything—men's rations, hay and corn. Army transport did not exist, and the General was at once thrown upon his own resources as to the arrangements for feeding the troops about to take the field. Providentially, there existed in the North-West a ready-made transport and supply office. The Hudson's Bay Company knew the country and its customs, and where to obtain what was required. The Company agreed to furnish transport and supplies, the detailed arrangements being left with the officers of the expedition selected by the General. To the Hudson's Bay Company, and to the untiring zeal and the organisation of Captain Bedson, General Middleton's chief transport officer, a large share of the success of the expedition is due.

Our transport consisted of light four-wheeled wagons, carrying about one and a half tons, with two horses—the horses, as a rule, being excellent. The Bell Farm (a farm of 60,000 acres, and one of the great agricultural speculations of the North-West) itself supplied sixty teams. At the commencement of the campaign we paid \$10 a day per team, but latterly the price was somewhat reduced. Towards the end of the campaign we had in General Middleton's line of com-

² From Calgary to Edmonton is a march of 194 miles. From Swift Current to Battleford is a march of 200 miles.

munications 745 teams,³ working in perfect order, in connection with a system of depôts.

On the 2nd of April General Middleton left Qu'appelle Station, and marched nineteen miles to Fort Qu'appelle, a Hudson's Bay post. He halted there till the 6th, the time being fully occupied in rifle practice and general instruction of our small force, and in organisation of transport.

On the 6th we commenced our march in earnest. The country is not difficult for troops. Rolling prairie land, covered here and there more or less thickly with poplar 'bluffs,'⁴ it resembles much an English park. Engineered roads there are none, but there are few bad gradients, and few watercourses; and luckily for us the frost was still deep enough in the ground to give good bottom to what might later in the season have proved awkward quagmires. Though the season was breaking, the cold was intense. Our tent-pegs froze fast in the ground, and we had to cut them out on striking camp. Our boots froze to the stirrup-irons. There was a perpetual high wind, rain, and occasional 'blizzard.'⁵ But the troops trudged on constantly, doing twenty miles a day. At night we formed our wagons into a 'corrale,' after the American fashion, wheel to wheel and poles inwards, with the teamsters, tents, and horses inside the circle—the camp outside the 'corrale.'

Firewood and water were generally to be found in abundance. On the 13th we arrived at Humboldt. Halted the 14th, marched again the 15th. The General was anxious to secure Clarke's Crossing on the Saskatchewan as soon as possible. He hoped to be able to utilise the river as a line of communication, and the Crossing as an advanced post was therefore important. It was also on the telegraph line between Battleford and Humboldt. We had followed the river since leaving Qu'appelle, and by tapping it were generally in communication with Battleford and Ottawa.

We arrived at Clarke's Crossing on the 17th, having marched 177 miles in twelve days, or nearly fifteen miles a day including halts, and nearly eighteen miles a day exclusive of halts. We found there a small white settlement, capable of affording us a few supplies at extravagant prices, a telegraph station, and two ferry boats or 'scows.' The Saskatchewan is here about 300 yards across a muddy rapid river, with steep banks some 150 feet high, deep mud and shingle to the water's edge, strewn with huge masses of ice left there by the spring freshets. At the Crossing and on the march there we were overtaken by A Battery from Quebec, with two guns (9 pr. R.M.L.), the 10th Grenadiers from Toronto, and Bolton's Mounted Infantry.

³ A team means a pair of horses.

⁴ 'Bluff' is the North-West term for a wood. 'Heavy bluff' means thick wood.

⁵ A snowstorm with high wind.

The force destined to attack Riel's position was now complete, and was composed as follows:—

		All ranks
A Battery (Quebec), 2 9-pr. R.M.L. guns		111
C Company, Infantry School (Toronto)		45
10th Grenadiers (Toronto)		267
90th (Winnipeg)		314
Irregular Corps raised from } Bolton's Mounted Infantry		70
settlers ^a } French's Mounted Scouts		29
	Total	836

Our line of communications was almost unguarded. We had been unable to spare troops to look after the Indian reserves at Touchwood and the File Hills. Our convoys arrived daily without escort, and we had to hope that the show of force might overawe the country we had left behind us.

Our information was invariably bad. We found more certainly every day that reports as to the nature of the country were quite unreliable ; our maps were faulty, and the hugeness of the country would seem to have eliminated from the settler's mind all power of estimating distances, while it has strangely developed his faculty of imagination. The incorrectness of the detailed information we got from time to time from persons who should have been well informed was maddening. It was, however, evident that Riel had left the neighbourhood of Duck Lake, and had established himself on the east side of the Saskatchewan at Batoches Ferry. We were told that the main body of the 'breeds' were there, and that they had strengthened their position with rifle-pits. The Indian portion of Riel's force were reported on the west side of the Saskatchewan, opposite Batoches. As there was a good ferry at that place, he would have no difficulty in moving to whatever side he pleased. 'Beardy' and 'One Arrow,' the Cree chiefs, had joined him, and also the 'Whitecap' Sioux from Saskatoon. He was reported to have with him about 500 men, badly armed, half of whom were Indians, and the other half French half-breeds. He had established a provisional government, with a council at Batoches, and had put the direction of military matters into the hands of Gabriel Dumont, a well-known buffalo hunter and crack rifle shot.

From Clarke's Crossing to Batoches is thirty-three miles. The trail along the east bank was reported clear of wood to Gabriel's Crossing (twenty-eight miles), after which it was said to enter thick bush, and to be very dangerous. The trail along the west bank passed through an open country to nearly opposite Batoches, where it also entered the bush. The General decided to divide his force and to advance by the trails on both sides of the river. Riel would then, if defeated on either side, be unable to make good his retreat by crossing the river. We also intercepted his line of retreat to the States, while if he

^a Both these corps were called the Scouts.

attempted to go north he must run the gauntlet of Colonel Irvine's scouts from Prince Albert.

On the 18th, Bolton's Mounted Infantry reconnoitred the trail on the east bank. The day was stormy, snowing hard, but we succeeded in taking three Sioux Indians of Whitecap's band, who proved to be two sons of the chief and his son-in-law. On the 22nd, French's scouts went out on the west side of the river, and again came on Riel's scouts, and exchanged a few shots. By the evening of the 23rd we had, with much labour, by means of a roughly contrived ferry, succeeded in passing over to the opposite bank the troops to form the western column.

Our force was pretty equally divided. Lieut.-Colonel Montizambert of the Canadian Artillery commanded the Western Force, consisting of the 10th Grenadiers, the Winnipeg Field Battery and two guns, a detachment from A Battery, and fifty mounted men of the Irregular Corps. The General remained on the east bank, and had with him the 90th A Battery and two guns, forty men of the Infantry School, and fifty of Bolton's Mounted Infantry; each column was about 400 strong. I accompanied the Western Force. A scow⁷ had orders to follow us down the river, taking with it a small boat, in case we wished to communicate.

On the morning of the 23rd both columns, within sight of each other, commenced their march down the river. The weather was getting much warmer, and the prairie was already dotted with flowers. In the evening we camped opposite each other, the General's force at a small settlement called Mackintosh's Farm.

As Colonel Montizambert's column was very short of hay and corn I crossed the river early on the 24th, and arranged for some to be sent over to us by means of the scow, and after breakfasting with the General returned to the western bank. I had hardly got into camp when our scouts reported firing on the bank I had just left. We soon distinctly heard the rattle of musketry and the firing of Middleton's guns, and following the sound moved down the river bank. But the bush was thick, and we had to guard against attack ourselves. The smoke from the guns was clearly visible, and soon a mounted man came down to the opposite bank and called over to us to come across. The river was broad and rapid, fording it was out of the question; and the scow was some distance behind us waiting to load with hay. We at last got her down, and picking our way through the ice boulders I crossed with one company of the 10th Grenadiers and some scouts, forced our way through the thick wood and up the steep bank on the opposite side, and joined the General about 1 p.m. After a hard tussle he had beaten back a rebel attack, and was doing his best to force them from their rifle pits in a deep ravine, called Fish Creek. He had been attacked soon after striking his camp at

⁷ A large flat-bottomed boat.

Mackintosh's Farm. Bolton's Mounted Infantry, pushed well to the front, had been suddenly fired on. The trail crosses Fish Creek, and it was probably the rebel intention that his column should descend into the Creek before it was attacked; but our scouts, in extended order, had turned each copsewood as they came to it, and the hidden enemy, probably not liking to allow men to pass his flanks, fired too soon and let the cat out of the bag. The General had time to get up his infantry and guns, and though attacked on both his flanks, he drove them back. But immediately to his front, in a deep hollow of the wooded ravine, were rifle pits commanding the trail, and from these the rebels never budged. Our men lined the crest of the ravine, and fired into the pits. We sent our two nine-pounders across, and took them in reverse with case shot, but in vain. And all day long almost entirely concealed the rebels picked off our men. The General was shot through his fur cap. Both his aides-de-camp were wounded, one having two horses shot under him. And my orderly's horse was shot. Evening was coming on, and we had lost heavily. The General decided that to rush the pits would entail a heavy loss of life, which the advantage gained would not in any way repay. And he decided to pitch his camp. We chose a place half a mile from the Creek, near the Saskatchewan, on a fine open piece of prairie. Two more companies of the 10th Grenadiers and the Winnipeg Field Battery had joined us late in the afternoon; but all the transport of the western column was still on the other side of the river, and with it were only fifty scouts and one company of the 10th.

Night came on with pelting rain. None of us are likely to forget the dark wet night of the 24th close to the deep ravine, still holding, for all we knew, a concealed enemy, and with us nothing but raw troops, totally unaccustomed to night work, and hampered by wounded men, or the bright moonlight and the false alarm of the 26th, when Darcy Baker, of the Scouts, lying badly wounded, sprang up, called for his rifle and his horse, and fell back dead. We thought we had come out for a picnic, and it was impossible to help feeling that war's hardships are doubly cruel to the civilian soldier.

On the 25th we did nothing. We wanted breathing time. On the 26th a strong party went to the scene of the fight, and recovered two of our men whom we had left dead. They were not scalped, and had not been touched. We found two dead Indians, and fifty-five dead or dying rebel ponies. The enemy had evidently left the neighbourhood. Our own loss was ten killed or died of wounds, and forty-seven wounded, out of about four hundred men engaged. The rebel loss, as subsequently ascertained, was, I believe, six killed and about fifteen or sixteen wounded. The main body of their whole force had probably been brought against us.

Late in the afternoon our half-breed interpreter Peter Hourie had called over the edge of the ravine to the men in the pits, 'Is Gabriel

Dumont there?' Answer, 'Yes.' 'Are there many of you there?' 'There are plenty of us left.' 'Will you have a talk with me?' No answer. We believed that the rebels were fighting on the orders of Gabriel Dumont, but that Riel himself was not present. The Metis had met us on their frontier. Fish Creek is the boundary of the half-breed settlement, St. Antoine de Padua.

We halted at Fish Creek till the 7th of May, hoping daily for the arrival of the steamer 'Northcote' from Swift Current with men and supplies; but the Saskatchewan played us very false, and owing to shallow water and sand banks there was tantalising delay. We made frequent reconnaissances with our mounted scouts, and found that the country was deserted to below Gabriel's Crossing, some ten miles from our camp. All along the river banks we found comfortable farmhouses, whose Metis owners had fled.

On the 5th of May the 'Northcote' arrived, bringing a large quantity of ammunition and supplies, two companies of the Midland Battalion under Colonel Williams, and a Gatling gun, with Captain Howard, an American officer who had been sent with it from the Gatling factory at St. Paul, to explain its working. Lieut.-Colonel Van Straubenzee also came in the 'Northcote,' and assumed command of the infantry of the force.

After Fish Creek the General decided to reunite his forces, and the column on the west bank rejoined him. On the 7th he struck his camp and marched to Gabriel's Crossing, some six miles from Batoches, and on the 8th left Gabriel's Crossing, and instead of keeping to the river trail marched straight away from the river till he reached the open prairie, and then turned to the left across country, picking his own line, till he struck the main trail from Humboldt to Batoches, some eight miles from that place, and pitched his camp on the open prairie just outside the bush.* There would appear to be a belt of bush commencing near Fish Creek, and running parallel to the river for a breadth of some miles. We had avoided it so far, but now had to pass through it to reach Batoches. On the evening of the 8th we pushed the Mounted Infantry some five miles through the bush towards Batoches, putting to flight some rebel scouts, and returning to camp in the evening.

On the morning of the 9th we marched to attack Batoches. We left our camp standing, and took with us every available man. The 'Northcote,' with thirty-five men of C Company, had been told to drop down the river from Gabriel's Crossing, and be off Batoches at 8 A.M. on the 9th, so as to intercept Riel should he attempt to

* We had been led to believe that by leaving the river bank we should avoid some dangerous bush, and by crossing the open prairie could arrive at a point in the open tolerably near Batoches. The information was not correct, and we camped on the evening of the 8th further than we expected from Batoches; but the bush through which we had to pass was probably not so dangerous as if we had continued by the river trail.

cross the river. She was to get into action as soon as possible after 8 A.M., and to make any diversion she could in our favour. We hoped to attack on the land side at the same time. Reveille sounded at 4 A.M., and we marched between 5 A.M. and 6 A.M. on a lovely spring morning.

ORDER OF MARCH.

Bolton's Mounted Infantry extended with Mounted Infantry supports to extended men on both flanks.

Main body of Bolton's Mounted Infantry.

Gatling gun.

Advanced guard 10th Grenadiers.

90th Battalion.

A Battery: 2 9-pr. R.M.L. guns.

2 Companies Midland Battalion.

Winnipeg field battery: 2 9-pr. R.M.L. guns.

Ammunition wagons.

Ambulance.

French's Scouts.

At 8 A.M. we heard the 'Northcote' whistling, and she soon commenced a sharp musketry fire. At the same time we struck the river bank, and found ourselves in more open ground, almost in what may be called the suburbs of the Batoches settlement. We got up our field guns, opened fire on the houses, and pushed on with a company of the 10th Grenadiers extended. The trail here runs close to the river bank, which is high and precipitous, covered with bush to the water's edge. We soon found ourselves on an open space in front of the Roman Catholic church and the priest's house, which was full of priests and nuns and half-breed women and children. From here you could see right into the settlement, which lay in a hollow below us, fringed with thick 'bluff'—Riel's council house in the centre of the hollow some eight hundred yards from us. On the other side of the river were the numerous 'tepees'⁹ of an Indian camp. We opened fire on his council house. Two guns had been moved off the trail a few yards down the bank, which was not here so steep, in order to get a better range at the houses; Howard, with his Gatling gun, was there too. A scout reported to me that he had been fired on from a rifle pit on our right front; but we had met with little opposition, when suddenly there was a shrill war whoop of many voices under the muzzle of the right-hand gun. Unseen, the Crees had crept almost to the guns. There was a general hurried move to the open, when the rattle of the Gatling and a sudden cessation of the war whoops told that Howard had not moved.

Between us and the settlement in the hollow was this belt of bush; and all day long from it came a nasty galling fire, assisted by

⁹ Indian tents.

Aug.

a dropping cross-fire from the opposite side of the river. In the afternoon the rebels set light to the bush in front of us, and a great cloud of smoke and fire moved down towards the church. We took our wounded from the church and placed them in wagons ready to move, for, hard pressed, we could not gain an inch. We had no supports; things looked critical, and there was eight miles of bush between us and our camp.

In the afternoon I was sent by the General to the telegraph station at Humboldt (sixty-five miles). How the little column gallantly forced its way into Batoches on the morning of the 11th is now a part of Canadian history. It lost, in the three days' fighting, nine killed and thirty wounded—the rebel loss being fifty-one killed and one hundred and seventy-three wounded.¹⁰

On the 15th Riel surrendered to Middleton's scouts. His chief lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, escaped across the frontier. The rebellion was practically at an end. 'Poundmaker' surrendered to General Middleton at Battleford on the 26th. General Strange had guaranteed the safety of Edmonton, and though the pursuit of 'Big Bear' gave the troops more hard work, all cause for anxiety had disappeared with Riel's defeat at Batoches.

The trial of Riel at Regina will now bring to light the secret history of the rebellion. We shall learn what the intentions of the rebel leaders were had they been successful—did they mean to proclaim a Saskatchewan Republic, or had they any idea of asking for Imperial protection, or had they no plan at all? Riel, as a Metis, will probably say that in insurrection lay the only certainty of insuring attention to Metis wrongs, that he resisted the injustice of the Dominion Government and the Dominion police, but he may possibly assure us of his allegiance to the Queen, for amongst Indians 'the Queen,' the 'great mother,' is venerated, and the Metis may share the same feeling.

After Fish Creek a man of the 90th picked up a piece of paper, which he brought to me. The rebel leaders had feasted before the fight, and this was their programme for the evening:

PROGRAMME.

- 1^{re}. Souper.
- 2^{me}. Dessert.
- 3^{me}. La Santé de la Reine.
- 4^{me}. La Santé de M. Louis Riel et l'adresse de M. Philippe Garnot.¹¹
- 5^{me}. La Santé des Dames.

The Queen first, and then Louis Riel. It looks as if the rebels still claimed allegiance to their sovereign. We shall also learn how much bad times amongst the farming whites of the Saskatchewan may have influenced their sympathy with the 'Breeds.'

¹⁰ These numbers have no doubt since been officially corrected.

¹¹ Riel's private secretary.

On the whole, the rebellion will do good. It will render necessary a searching inquiry into the system of government of the North-West, the system of Indian agencies, and the means to be employed for the future ruling of the country. Immigration may be checked for a year or two, but in future the immigrant will be safer than he has ever been before. Prince Albert and Battleford have no doubt suffered heavily, but settlers generally will have benefited by the visit of the troops, while the insurrection has united in one common cause all the Provinces of the Dominion; battalions from Manitoba, Ontario, the Maritime Provinces, and Quebec, have served side by side in the field; and while French Canadians may reasonably hope that their blood relations may have a fair trial, they have as loyally condemned the rebellion as the people of Ontario.

The military experience gained will be valuable. When the campaign commenced the militia department knew nothing of the capabilities of its officers in the field, now many reputations have been made, and it will know in future what commanders it can rely on. The faults of the militia system have been brought into relief, and every good Canadian soldier must hope that the department which has done so well will seize the opportunity of disallowing, once for all, the unmilitary outside influences, which through custom have so often prevailed in purely military questions.

It has been General Middleton's lot to command the first volunteer or civilian soldiers who have been in action. And most gallantly have men and officers done their work. The men of his force were almost universally of the same class as our English volunteers—clerks in offices, mechanics, tradesmen. They were not soldiers by trade. Excellent material, splendid marchers, apt to learn, possessed of much handiness and ingenuity, especially with the axe, but unaccustomed to the work required of them, and with no time allowed them to gain experience, they went straight from their homes into action. The risk of much loss of life in a force so composed is an exceptionally heavy risk for a commander to incur, and no man in General Middleton's column is likely to forget their chief's generous solicitude for the safety of his troops. An unseen enemy is always a trying one, especially for an inexperienced force.

The Metis never showed themselves, but though good shots at short ranges, in other points they were contemptible. They never attacked a convoy, they never cut the wire behind us, and though Indians and 'Breeds' are born mounted infantry, who can shoot as well from their horses as on foot, they never harassed us on the march. Possibly the want of grass for their horses, owing to the earliness of the season, may account for this, but it would seem as if they intended only to defend their homes against invasion. At Fish Creek they met us on their frontier, at Batoches they fought us on their own doorstep. They were badly armed with a certain

number of repeating Winchester rifles, but many old smooth bores, they were short of ammunition, and it is doubtful if the force with Riel ever numbered 700 men, Indians and 'Breeds' combined. The prisoners they took they treated well, and they respected the dead.

As a military achievement the success of the campaign has been brilliant. The Hon. Mr. Caron, Minister of Militia, may justly be proud of the department which between the 23rd of March and the 20th of May placed 4,419 men in the field, the whole of which force, with the exception of the Winnipeg Corps and the irregular mounted troops, were sent from Lower Canada. A complete system of transport for three columns marching at great distances from each other had to be organised; and six weeks after General Middleton's departure from Fort Qu'appelle, Riel had been brought a prisoner into his camp. From Ottawa to Qu'appelle is 1,635 miles. From Qu'appelle to Batoches is a march of 243 miles. Lord Wolseley left Toronto on the 21st of May, 1870, and arrived at Fort Garry on the 24th of August, three months. In 1885 the last troops ordered out left Montreal for the front on the 11th of May, and arrived at Winnipeg on the 20th of May, nine days. So much has fifteen years of civilisation and a railway done for Canada.

MELGUND.